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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004781

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/PPA, NEA/AGS, INR/IZ, INR/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, SADDAM HUSSEIN TRIAL,
TRANSPARENCY, SOVEREIGNTY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major theme in editorials of today's newspapers focused on the upcoming election, electoral platforms and Saddam's trial.

Analysis: The independent Ad-Dustoor and quasi-independent As-Sabah focused on the voters and the difficulties they face in sifting through the huge number of electoral lists, candidates and platforms as well as concerns about a lack of democratic methods and sectarian tendencies in voting.

Independent Az-Zaman highlighted the prisoner abuse scandal in its page-five editorial which accused the Americans of complicity. A second editorial on page-eight dealt with the "Impartiality of the [Shi'a] Religious Authority."

The Kurdish Al-Ittihad published a page-three editorial entitled, "Khaniqueen: the City of Martyrs Prepares for the Upcoming Election," that addressed the city's tragedy and how it will always be a part of Kurdistan. At-Taakhi's editorials dealt with the upcoming election, democracy and the electoral platform of the Kurdish list No. 730.

The partisan Shi'a newspapers (Al-Adala, Al-Bayyan, Ad-Dawa, and Al-Bayna Al-Jadidah) published editorials about the upcoming elections, electoral platforms and Saddam's trial. Al-Adala published a page-three editorial entitled "Disparagement," in which the author opined that the trial was fair but that Saddam did not deserve justice. Most of the Shi'a papers critiqued the trial as too lenient on Saddam and other defendants.

Baghdad newspaper carried a back-page editorial entitled "Iyad Allawi Cultivates A Culture of Love" praising the candidate and encouraging voters to choose his list. November 29, 2005. END SUMMARY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [1A. "The Teacher Is Against Me" \(Al-Fourat, 11/29\)](#)
- [1B. "Saddam's Trial and the Farce of Human Rights" \(Al-Bayna Al-Jadidah, 11/29\)](#)
- [1C. "Voters" \(Ad-Dustoor, 11/29\)](#)
- [1D. "Differentiation" \(As-Sabah, 11/29\)](#)
- [1E. "The Impartiality of the Religious Authority" \(Az-Zaman, 11/29\)](#)

SELECTED COMMENTARIES

- [1A. "The Teacher Is Against Me"](#)
(Al-Fourat - independent, anti-coalition, published this back-page editorial by Daoud Al-Farhan)

"An assembly member revealed that the government has made critical decisions without reporting to the national assembly yet we all know that this government has been established by the national assembly. In addition, the Prime Minister is a member of the elected national assembly and is also a member in the UIA [United Iraqi Alliance] that has the overwhelming majority in the parliament. Hence, he will guarantee the majority of votes when he places an issue before assembly members. In any case, opposition members in the national assembly interpret this procedure as something along the lines of, 'the national assembly is weak, it just questions the government and ministers but without taking legal action against negligent officials.'

"I think that this is a weak excuse and it is similar to the pretext of school dropouts who claim that the teacher hates them which is why they have failed in their studies. I would like the speaker of the national assembly and the parliament to give an opinion on this issue because it is very dangerous matter. The parliament must not be merely dcor for what is called democracy. We all know that the government has twice extended the stay of the occupation forces without having approval from the national assembly. Many assembly members such as the Sadrists have objected to this decision.

"Furthermore, the government has conducted deals with some countries without any notification of the national assembly. Recently, National Security Advisor Muafaq Al-Rubai'ee conducted a meeting on security cooperation with Iran. He also agreed to organize the mechanisms of access for Iranian pilgrims to Najaf and Karbala. In fact, we do not know what the powers of national security advisor are. Who gave him the authority to sign a security agreement with Iran without reporting to the national assembly?"

"Moreover, the national assembly knows nothing about oil revenues. Additionally, it does not know which cities have assumed security responsibilities from the occupation forces and the Iraqi people want an explanation from the government about these issues. How can the government extend the stay of occupation forces in Iraq? Occupation forces which have destroyed, killed and looted the country. And if the national assembly has no role in this issue, how can we speak about democracy?"

B. "Saddam's Trial and the Farce of Human Rights"
(Al-Bayna Al-Jadidah - no bias, affiliated with the Shiite Political Council, published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"Saddam's speech during his trial yesterday reminds us of his former speeches. In fact, we and other families of martyrs thought that this trial would restore our Iraqi national pride which vanished during the era of the former regime. But, this trial, which was established in the name of human rights, has become nothing but a farce.

"The trial should not have been a place for Saddam to give his bombastic speeches. These speeches could destroy our hopes in the new Iraq. How can we establish a fair trial for a tyrant that used his power to commit manslaughter and wasted the wealth of Iraq? Our people were suffering to death during Saddam's regime while Ba'athists and Arabs danced merrily.

"We hope that our future will be new and civilized. But, civilization does not mean weakness--we have clear evidence that indicts the former corrupt regime. We have dreamed of establishing a new era that is free from oppression and terrorism but unfortunately, we have noticed that Saddam's trial was a farce for this criminal.

"Democracy is not a theatre in which we wait for actors to put on a significant performance. Saddam was sentenced to the death penalty since 1959 after he tried to assassinate Abdul Karim Qassem but escaped to Egypt to be saved from his sentence. Therefore, we must decapitate the head of the snake so that we can get rid of the dwarfs of terrorism."

C. "Voters"
(Ad-Dustoor - independent, no bias, published this front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh)

"We know that Iraqi voters are astonished by the huge number of electoral posters. But, at the same time, they are puzzled because they cannot distinguish between the enormous numbers of electoral lists and their platforms. Thus, we think that voters will, in the end, vote according to foreign influences that have nothing to do with the proper electoral awareness of voters.

"Voters must distance themselves from emotional and psychological influences, as well as others, that may happen inside the polling center. Unfortunately, electoral campaigns coerce voters to choose according to grandiose slogans, which affect voters' choices.

"When voters vote according to those factors, the democratic process will lose its most important chance to be successful. If we let our emotions determine our political choices, the final result will end in failure--emotions and politics often cannot be reconciled. If we vote according to our emotions, we will lament when we see those whom we elected fail to implement their promises. We must realize that elections represent a practice to identify the best, most truthful and efficient candidates that can deal with reality in Iraq."

D. "Differentiation"
(As-Sabah - Iraqi Media Network, government financed, pro-coalition, published this front-page editorial by Muhammad Abdul Jabbar)

"Electoral lists and their candidates compete to win the votes of the populace. Each list seeks to obtain the largest number of votes to acquire more seats in the next parliament--these lists use different methods and styles to convince voters to vote for them. These methods are numerous but they must not violate the laws of election lest they be subject to legal actions.

"The electoral lists published and disseminated their political platforms but it is very important to distinguish between slogans and platforms. We know that slogans represent general goals while platforms represent practical plans to achieve those goals. It seems that most of the current political platforms are similar in their subjects and ideas.

"We do not know the percentage of voters who will vote according to political platforms because it seems that this percentage is unknown so far. However, the similarity of political platforms among electoral lists will make it difficult for voters to distinguish among them. On the other hand, voters will be able to recognize names of candidates according to their factional, sectarian and ethnic affiliations. I think that this issue will harm the democratic perspective of the electoral process. We all know that democracy mandates that free choice and honest awareness must be primary conditions for public elections.

"Candidates can provide voters a free service by announcing the differences between their electoral lists. These differences must be clear and decisive so that voters can choose the best list. This process will only work if voters vote according to political platforms."

[1E](#). "The Impartiality of the Religious Authority"
(Az-Zaman - independent, anti-coalition, published this page-eight editorial by Ibrahim Al-Khayat)

"During the past two years, mosques were bombed, religious scholars were assassinated and we also heard calls for eradicating people according to sectarian reasons. However, the religious authority remained wise. After the downfall of the former regime, people thought that it was permissible to loot but the religious authority issued a fatwa which stated that looting is religiously prohibited. In addition, it called on Iraqis to cooperate to build their country.

"When Al-Sistani issued a fatwa encouraging the public to participate widely in the election, people reacted quickly against terrorism. Today, the wise religious authority has confirmed its parental role by not supporting any specific electoral list at the expenses of others. This move has put an end to any political group that wishes to use Al-Sistani's name in the electoral campaign. The religious authority has announced it will not receive any government delegations so that they cannot portray their visit as endorsement for their electoral list.

"The religious authority calls on Iraqis to participate widely in the election because voting is a legitimate right for citizens. This is not an obligation but the religious authority merely wants to advise citizens--it avoids interfering in the electoral competition so that nobody can speak against its holy position."

KHALILZAD